



Embrace the Unpredictable and Engineer the Unexpected

SURPRISE

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Embrace the Unpredictable AND Engineer the Unexpected

... CHAPTER CHEAT SHEETS ...

(for audio book listeners AND people who like cheat sheets)

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A Perigee Book



Understand
SURPRISE

... CHEAT SHEET ...

CHAPTER ONE

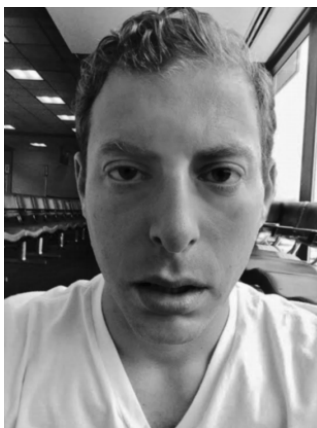
It's easy to forget what we read, even when it's fascinating (if we do say so ourselves). So we'll wrap up each chapter with a cheat sheet laden with key terms and tools you can refer to quickly.

THE BITE-SIZE VERSION

Our brains are hardwired to respond to surprise in a predictable pattern. When we understand the pattern we can hack into it and harness the power of surprise. (Bwahahaha!)

KEY TERMS

- **Surprise:** our reaction to unexpected and misexpected events. (Is it an emotion? A cognitive state? No one knows for sure. Surprise is mysterious like that.)
- **Schema (plural: schemata):** a mental framework for understanding something.
- **Surprise sequence:** Freeze, Find, Shift, Share (plug into the moment, get wildly curious, change your perspective, and talk about it with others).
- **Duh Face:** the true facial expression of surprise (seemingly dopey, actually fully absorbed in the moment).



Duh Face (Exhibit A)

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CHAPTER TWO

THE BITE-SIZE VERSION

Our future is becoming more surprising (thanks to the exponential rate of change) and less surprising (thanks to our future-predicting tools). To adapt to this new ecosystem, we need to become skilled in embracing and engineering surprise.

KEY TERM

- **Surprise Seesaw:** too much predictability leads to boredom, whereas too much surprise leads to anxiety. A balance between predictability and surprise is ideal (but, as any experienced seesawer will tell you, tough to master).





Embrace the
UNPREDICATABLE

... CHEAT SHEET ...

CHAPTER THREE

THE BITE-SIZE VERSION

Resilience is a skill that allows us to bounce back from negative surprises. Resilient people are happier, more successful, and better able to turn lousy luck into a good opportunity.

TOOLS

- **Set stable ground:** to let in more surprise, form stable relationships and create habits that build up the predictability/certainty side of your Surprise Seesaw.
- **Reframe:** shift your perspective to spot the advantages of negative situations.
- **Make a struggle sandwich:** learn to associate struggle with success. Set yourself up for small wins then give yourself a chance to struggle. Don't give up until you've reached your goal.
- **Pivot:** when a bad surprise taps you on your shoulder use it as an opportunity to go in a new direction.

EXERCISE YOUR SURPRISE MUSCLE

Uh-oh! Your company is laying off employees left and right. What can you do to build your resilience and embrace surprise?

... CHEAT SHEET ...

CHAPTER FOUR

THE BITE-SIZE VERSION

Reframe vulnerability as openness rather than weakness. When we let ourselves be vulnerable, we experience life more fully and build deeper connections. Cool is the enemy of growth. Protection is the enemy of connection. Distance is the enemy of influence.

TOOLS

- **Own your mistakes:** invite connection by talking about your mistakes and weaknesses (without subtly blaming them on someone or something else).
- **Next notch:** reveal just one notch more than you feel comfortable revealing.
- **Ask for help:** find small ways to ask people to lend you a hand.

EXERCISE YOUR SURPRISE MUSCLE

You're at a gathering with people you don't know. The atmosphere is stiff. Before calling it a night, give these folks one more shot. Reframe vulnerability as openness and come up with ways to build connections with the guests.

... CHEAT SHEET ...

CHAPTER FIVE

THE BITE-SIZE VERSION

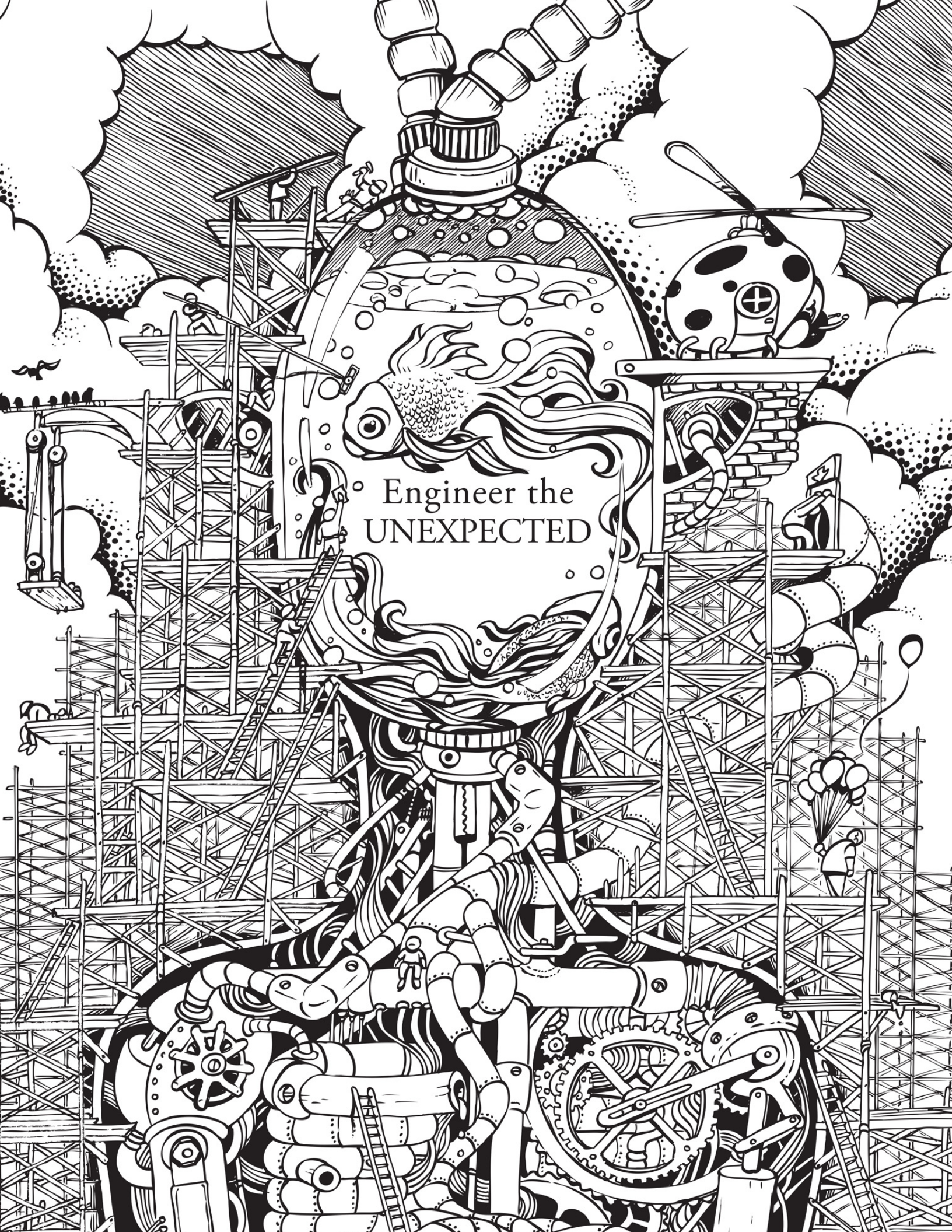
We feel uncertain when we can't predict what will happen. We experience ambiguity when there are too many options. Our brains are wired to eliminate both types of unknowns. We avoid them or we rush to reach a sense of certainty. Neither approach is adaptive. Instead of following our instincts, we can become skilled at not-knowing. Take action from the Middle Way and build your cognitive flex.

TOOLS

- **Call it an experiment:** making a final decision can feel paralyzing. Instead, call your decisions experiments and repeat them until you like the result.
- **Scenario plan:** devise several stories of possible futures and create a plan that is flexible enough to fit any of them.
- **Improvise:** focus on others instead of on yourself and don't be attached to outcome.
- **Get to the pot of gold on the other side of awkward:** collect awkwardness the way you would collect stamps. Remind yourself that you have to wade through awkwardness to reach connection, fulfillment, and growth.
- **Engage in reverse debates:** select views that seem very different from yours and spot all the ways in which they are actually similar to what you believe.

EXERCISE YOUR SURPRISE MUSCLE

You're starting a project in an unfamiliar field. You're feeling insecure, and it doesn't help that some people in your company are excited about the project while others say it's bound to fail. You find yourself awake at night. What can you do to embrace the unpredictability?



• Engineer the
UNEXPECTED

... CHEAT SHEET ...

CHAPTER SIX

THE BITE-SIZE VERSION

To engineer the unexpected, we need to get creative. Creative thinking means devising new ideas and shifting our perspective to see things in surprising ways.

TOOLS

- **Get to curious:** think of curious as a place you go to rather than an emotion you feel. Get more engaged with your environment by playing the Twenty Questions game.
- **Live in the fog:** when searching for answers, tell yourself that it's okay to sit in the fog and wait for a while—the fog is where our brains generate the best ideas. Collect observations without searching for answers.
- **Practice idea mixology:** spark new ideas by inviting collisions of unrelated topics.
- **Iterate:** release ideas into the world quickly and often so that you can tweak them—get lots of small surprises instead of setting yourself up for one big unpleasant surprise.

EXERCISE YOUR SURPRISE MUSCLE

Imagine you are on the block party planning committee in your town. You have to come up with party ideas the likes of which the world has never seen. Use the tools above to get creative. What ideas do you have for making your block party a blockbuster?

... CHEAT SHEET ...

CHAPTER SEVEN

THE BITE-SIZE VERSION

Getting attention means stopping people in their tracks and sparking their curiosity. Keeping attention requires planting many small surprises and stretching the wonder.

TOOLS

- **Interrupt patterns:** create a pattern then give it a twist, or spot an existing pattern and do something different from what people expect.
- **Create knowledge gaps:** show people there is something they don't know yet and that they have to keep listening to get the answer.
- **Produce predictable unpredictability:** establish an expectation that a surprise will come—though no one should know when or how.
- **Unfold mystery:** use suspense to your advantage. Instead of presenting information all at once, reveal it little by little.

EXERCISE YOUR SURPRISE MUSCLE

You have to give a presentation on the concepts you just read about in this book. Your audience consists of executives who insist that they have very little time. They're all armed with smartphones and get easily distracted. How can you get and keep their attention?

... CHEAT SHEET ...

CHAPTER EIGHT

THE BITE-SIZE VERSION

When we trigger delight we create loyalty, catalyze word of mouth, increase productivity, and turn ordinary into extraordinary. Delight also makes people feel good, which is reason enough to take it seriously. To design delight, spot where the most meaningful expectation bars lie and surpass them.

TOOLS

- **Under promise/over deliver:** set expectations just an inch or two lower than you plan to deliver, then give people more than they expect.
- **Bury a cookie:** leave a small surprise where people aren't expecting it (in your email, your meals, and even your outfits).
- **Give just because:** intensify delight by giving with no explanation.

EXERCISE YOUR SURPRISE MUSCLE

Your friend recently opened a restaurant. She is looking for ideas to delight her customers. Use the tools above. What surprising ideas do you propose, you surprise maker you?

... CHEAT SHEET ...

CHAPTER NINE

THE BITE-SIZE VERSION

The difference between a commodity, service, and experience is in the amount of surprise you feel when interacting with it. More surprise makes things more experiential. Experiences are immersive, memorable, and transformative.

TOOLS

- **Create a red thread:** unite the elements of your experience with a single theme or recurring message.
- **Activate the senses:** enhance your experiences by exciting each of the senses (especially the ones that tend to get overlooked).
- **Cocreate:** invite participants to help make the experience with you. Leave negative space so that others can fill it.
- **Map the journey:** create an entrance, center, and exit for your experience. Start by creating safety and sparking wonder. End by tying up loose ends, allowing time for reflection, and leaving a question to linger.

EXERCISE YOUR SURPRISE MUSCLE

It's time to embrace your destiny as an experience maker. Pick someone to invite over for dinner next week. Now start plotting. How can you turn the event into an experience (a good experience)?



... CHEAT SHEET ...

CHAPTER TEN

THE BITE-SIZE VERSION

The quality of our relationships determines the quality of our lives. Cultivate your relationships every day. (Today included.) Relationships thrive from a balance of predictability and surprise.

TOOLS

- **Maintain complexity:** hold opposing views at the same time about yourself and others.
- **Balance oneness with otherness:** find a balance between what you know and don't know to create comfort *and* intrigue.
- **Balance novelty and routine:** combine exciting new experiences with tradition.
- **Practice the magic ratio:** notice the ratio of positive to negative experiences in your relationships. Be sure you are engineering more positive than negative surprises.
- **Speak the right surprise language:** discover people's love languages (words, touch, gifts, quality time, or service). Surprise them in the ways they find most meaningful.
- **Track patterns:** spot routine behaviors. Do more of what works and less of what doesn't. To spark change, interrupt patterns you don't like.

EXERCISE YOUR SURPRISE MUSCLE

Your friend is having trouble in his relationship of fifteen years. That's a long time! He says it no longer feels fulfilling. They've run out of things to talk about and just sit around watching TV on the weekends. He knows you are a phenomenal advice giver, so he turns to you for help. What do you recommend?

... CHEAT SHEET ...

CHAPTER ELEVEN

THE BITE-SIZE VERSION

When we are surprised we feel deeply connected and thoroughly alive. Surprising ourselves every day is a vital part of living a happy life.

TOOLS

- **Collect novelty:** try new things, visit new places, and meet new people. Novelty stimulates dopamine, the neurochemical associated with interest and motivation.
- **Turn on wonder:** slow down and look at the world with fresh eyes. Seek out small surprises that you've never noticed. Say, "I wonder . . ." often and see what happens.
- **Seek awe:** surround yourself with experiences that make you feel like part of something larger (nature, intricate design, extraordinary skill, admirable moral acts). Awe slows down our perception of time and makes us more helpful.
- **Grow your comfort zone:** stretch across the imaginary line of your comfort zone every day. Keep in mind that as time passes, we regret the things we do not do.
- **Practice gratitude:** create rituals to periodically reset your expectation bars.

EXERCISE YOUR SURPRISE MUSCLE

Your final mission is to turn surprise into a habit. How will you remember to think like a Surprisologist? Choose an anchor that will become your reminder. For example, every time you hear the sound of a car horn or see a dime, check in to see whether you are surprising yourself regularly. What will your anchor be? What is one small way that you can surprise yourself today? Ask yourself, "What would a Surprisologist do?"

The End

